

Hm++, a new Professional Standard

(From the desk of the Chairman of the Board of Mathematics Inc.)

It was the French pilot/philosopher Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who draw attention to a tragic aspect of the human predicament, viz. that we have to make today our plans for tomorrow with yesterday's words. For the Universities all through the Western World, the predicament is orders of magnitude worse, for they have to make today their plans for the next 50 years while still using a vocabulary that is more than half a century old, and in the mean time totally out of date. It is really pathetic! For instance, recruitment, appointment, promotion and recommendation of faculty is still carried out in terms of the elevated scientific and scholarly values of the late Enlightenment, in complete disregard of the academic explosion after WWII, which has turned the campus into an intellectual morass where, overwhelmingly, the mediocre teach the mediocre and where all forms of scientific originality and technical perfectionism are met by grave suspicion. (Professors of today, of course, don't know their de Saint-Exupéry, but much of the dishonesty in today's promotional process can be traced back to the linguistic dilemma he pointed out.)

Of all the Departments of the University, those of Mathematics are, all over the world, in the greatest difficulties, for while the other disciplines only evolved, Mathematics was just revolutionized: from an uncontrolled, unpredictable and ill-directed hobby of a bunch of admittedly in their own way sort-of brilliant, but otherwise irresponsible and unaccountable amateurs, Mathematics has been turned around into a reliable, well-controlled, goal-directed, predictable, and hence manageable industrial activity. This drastic change has taken place all over the civilized world, i.e. wherever Mathematics Inc., the world's leading manufacturer of mathematical products, has extended its market. Whereas now science & technology, research & development, and business & commerce all over the world can in principle benefit from the empowering force of our products, it pains us to see that in many places such organizations are denied the benefits of our products, only because of the inadequate and misleading training of the local mathematicians. How often have we not seen that a local mathematician, when faced with an industrial problem, would start thinking, just hoping that "by intuition" the solution would fall into his lap! In a well-run organization, focussed on its mission, it is obviously fatal to have in a crucial position such a dreamer as your employee.

A field study of our Department of Market Penetration has revealed what I had already suspected: the real culprits are the mathematical faculty members, who are teaching mathematics as if it is still 1900 and as if no Mathematics Inc. has created a totally new technological process! For two years we studied the recruitment, promotion and appointment process, and as a service to the educational mathematical community we can now offer a set of world-wide integrated professional standards, strict adherence to which is guaranteed to lead your Department with flying colours into the 21st Century. These standards are marketed under the name "Hm++" and bona fide educational institutions --I mean those that don't fire their teaching staff within 3 years-- can get a 10% discount.

These internationally acclaimed standards for Professors of Mathematics, as they will be applied and maintained by Mathematics Inc., will make a great difference all over the world, and will rejuvenate the teaching of the Queen of Sciences. Of course, there have been standards --sort of, at least-- in the past, but they hurt more than they helped. They were informal, unwritten, and on the whole unrealistically strict, and many Departments of Mathematics felt inferior, only because they suspected that they did not meet those standards, but with the new Hm++ stand-ards, no institute will need to feel inferior any more: no more deviant "superstars" in the departments of your competitors, and thanks to the reliable and perceptive control by Mathematics Inc.'s inspectors, no unplanned developments that could disturb the subtle balance of intellectual and social powers, which is so essential for the flourishing of well-managed and focussed development of mathematics.

Mathematics Inc. does not use the New Hm++ standards only for a greater homogeneity in the educational field, so that employers in the mathematical industry know better what to expect; we also use the opportunity to adapt the general educational mission so that we can present mathematics as "Rigour with a Human Face", a campaign to support the relaxation of the oppressively stringent requirements of yore.

This is a development that the Universities, contemplative, conservative and looking backwards as they are, have not seen yet, but with which we at Mathematics Inc., pioneering at the Frontier of Mathematical Innovation, are only too familiar. The traditional requirements are so constraining that they are hurting mathematical

productivity: the set of remaining conclusions that can still be drawn in the old ways is dwindling rapidly, and before this was going to show up on our balance sheet, we had to do something about it, and, I am happy to add, we have been as successful as usual. Hesitating between Creative Logic and Experimental Logic, we implemented both, and have been fortunate to see a fruitful synergy emerging: Experimental Logic comes with the new results, for which Creative Logic then provides the embedding context. This is no minor matter! I would like you to know that in the estimation of our Office of Strategic Planning --and usually they are remarkably accurate!-- this broadening of the vision of what mathematics can be will create room for another 150 to 200 years of mathematical growth! But with such a clear vision of the potential industrial and cultural future of Mankind, it would obviously have been totally irresponsible, had Mathematics Inc. left the Course of History to the uncontrolled forces of the market place, and that is why, in full accordance with its humanitarian calling, the necessary steps were taken by Mathematics Inc.. Semper floreat et crescat!

Hosanna Building
Plataanstraat 5
5671 AL Nuenen
The Netherlands

1 December 1995
prof.dr.Edsger W.Dijkstra
Chairman of the Board of
Mathematics Inc.